



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Table of Contents

- General Questions
- Eligibility
- Application Process
- PDF Activities
- Selection
- Reimbursement
- More Information

General Questions about the Program:

1. Q: What is the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) program?

A: The Family Liaison Office's (FLO) Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) program supports spouses and partners in their efforts to maintain, enhance, and/or develop their professional skills while overseas. The program is open to spouses and partners of direct-hire U.S. government employees from all agencies serving overseas under Chief of Mission authority.

The total amount awarded will be subject to budgetary constraints. The program has a minimum individual PDF of \$1,000 and a maximum of \$2,500 offered on a reimbursable basis for enrichment activities. Applicants compete for a limited number of PDFs and applications are reviewed by a selection committee. Selected applicants will self-fund a minimum of 25% of the allowed reimbursable cost of the activity for which the PDF is based, while the PDF will cover the additional allowed reimbursable cost up to the \$2,500 maximum. Proposals may include a wide range of activities, but are not limited to, classroom and distance learning courses, professional development activities, obtaining or renewing professional certifications or licenses and participation in professional conferences. The PDF program period is August 1 to July 31 of the following year.

Announcement of the annual PDF program period is usually released in March in a cable, the FLO Weekly newsletter, post newsletters, and on the FLO website, www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21642.htm. Applications are typically accepted through May 1, although dates and program details may vary from program period to program period.

2. Q: What is the timeline for the professional activities?

A: The PDF program period covers activities that commence on August 1 and conclude no later than July 31 of the following year.

3. Q: Do I have to get pre-approval for the use of the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF)?

A: Yes. Applicants compete for a limited number of PDFs. Applications are reviewed by a selection committee. Open application season begins in March each year and ends May 1. All applicants are notified as to their status by August 1.

Eligibility

1. Q: Who is eligible to apply for the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) program?

A: The U.S. Department of State's annual PDF program is open to spouses and partners of direct-hire U.S. government employees from all agencies serving overseas under Chief of Mission authority.

Applicants must be the spouse or partner of a direct-hire U.S. government employee ("sponsor") assigned to and residing at an overseas post under Chief of Mission authority during the fellowship period dates of August 1 through July 31 of the following year.

- Spouses and partners of those employees assigned to unaccompanied posts are eligible to apply only if they are residing overseas during the PDF period.
- Spouses and partners of those employees on domestic assignments, on TDY in the United States, in training in the United States, or who are on unaccompanied tours but are residing in the United States during the PDF program period are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants who have received a previous PDF and who meet the eligibility requirements may apply again. However, applicants who have received PDFs for the two previous consecutive program periods must wait one program period before reapplying.

2. Q: Are Professional Development Fellowships (PDFs) open to spouses and partners who are currently employed?

A: Yes. Applicants are not required to be unemployed to apply for a PDF.

3. Q: Is a non-U.S. citizen spouse or partner eligible to apply for a Professional Development Fellowship (PDF)?

A: Yes. Citizenship is not a requirement to apply for a PDF. Please go to [FLO's PDF webpage](#) for complete eligibility criteria. Please be aware that if selected to receive a PDF, payment must be made to a U.S. bank account owned by the PDF selectee. If a PDF selectee does not have a SSN, however, they can still be reimbursed without one.

- 4. Q: My direct-hire U.S. government employee spouse has just been accepted to the May A-100 class. We won't know where we are going until October. Am I eligible to apply in case our assignment is overseas?**

A: No. To be eligible to apply for a PDF, you must have an overseas assignment by the deadline to apply (May 1, 2015) and you must also be residing at an overseas post during the PDF period.

- 5. Q: My husband is being posted to the U.S. Mission for the United Nations. Would this be considered an overseas assignment and as such, would I be eligible to apply for a PDF?**

A: No, because it is a domestic assignment. To be eligible to apply for the PDF program, your direct-hire U.S. government employee ("sponsor") spouse or partner must be assigned to an overseas post.

- 6. Q: I am a U.S. government contractor at the U.S. Embassy. Is my wife eligible to apply for the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) to finish her degree?**

A: Unfortunately, contractors' family members do not qualify for the program.

- 7. Q: We are currently in Virginia while my husband takes language training at FSI. We will arrive at post this August. Am I still eligible to apply, even though we won't be at post by the application deadline of May 1, 2015?**

A: Yes. As long as you have an assignment to an overseas post by the time you apply and you must reside overseas during the PDF program period, which is August 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016. Please note that you cannot begin your PDF activity before arriving at your overseas post.

- 8. Q: Am I eligible to apply for a PDF if we will be assigned to and residing at an overseas post for only part of the PDF program period?**

A: It depends on the timing. You cannot begin your PDF activity until the PDF program period begins, which is August 1, 2015 OR before arriving at your overseas post. If you are departing the overseas post before the end of the PDF program period, which is July 31, 2016, you must complete your PDF activity before you depart.

- 9. Q: If one of my proposed courses starts in July 2016 but takes 12 weeks to complete, can I complete the course AFTER the PDF program period end date of July 31, 2016?**

A: No. PDF program activities must be started and completed within the program period dates of August 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016.

Application Process

1. **Q: When will the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) Program application period open?**

A: Announcement of the annual PDF program period is usually released in March. Applications are typically accepted through May 1, although dates and program details may vary from program period to program period. The PDF program period is August 1 to July 31. The most current details about the program can be found on FLO's [website](#).

2. **Q: Where can I find the application form for the Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) Program?**

A: FLO sends a cable to all overseas posts announcing the annual open application period which contains all the details of the program and instructions about how to request an application form. You can find the announcement and information regarding the application process and how to request an application form on FLO's [website](#). The program is usually announced in March and applications are usually due by May 1.

If you don't find the answers to your questions on the FLO website, inquiries can be emailed to **FLOAskEmployment@state.gov**.

3. **Q: When can I apply for a Professional Development Fellowship (PDF)?**

A: The PDF program is an annual program with an open season during which applications are accepted. The PDF program is usually announced in March and the deadline to apply is usually May 1. Applicants compete for a limited number of fellowships. Program details can change from program period to program period and the FLO [website](#) has the most up-to-date information, including the upcoming 2015/2016 PDF program announcement. The program is announced in an ALDAC (cable), in the FLO Weekly newsletter, in post newsletters, and in various social media sites that family members are known to frequent.

You can subscribe to receive the FLO Weekly newsletter directly to your personal email address. If you are interested, please email **FLOPublications@state.gov**.

4. **Q: Can I apply to the next PDF open season to get reimbursed for classes I took already?**

A: No. The PDF does not cover costs that incurred before the PDF program period dates to which you are applying. If you are selected to receive a PDF, the 2015/2016 upcoming fellowship program period will cover activities that start on or after August 1, 2015 and conclude no later than July 31, 2016.

5. **Q: Would I be permitted to submit two applications?**

A: No. You can submit only one application.

6. **Q: I would like to submit a proposal for distance learning courses and also a professional conference. Is this acceptable or do I need to choose just one?**

A: You can submit only one PDF application proposal, but your proposal can include multiple activities as long as they all support your professional development plan. Be sure to address this thoroughly and in detail in your application and also include a detailed breakdown of the costs for all activities.

PDF Activities

1. **Q: Which professional activities could be eligible under the PDF program?**

A: Activities can include, *but are not limited to*, classroom and distance learning courses, professional development, obtaining or renewal of professional certification and license, and participation in professional conferences. The PDF program period for activities is August 1 through July 31.

2. **Q: Can I propose to take courses at FSI for my Professional Development Fellowship (PDF) activity?**

A: No. FSI courses are not eligible PDF activities because FSI does not accept payment from individuals.

3. **Q: I plan to take on-line courses. Can I include the monthly internet cost and the cost of a laptop in my proposal?**

A: No. If you are submitting a PDF proposal for an on-line course, you must have internet connection and a computer. Hardware and equipment are non-allowable expenses.

4. **Q: Can a PDF be used for an online MBA through a host country school?**

A: Yes. This activity is eligible for the PDF program. If your proposal is selected, the courses must be taken within the PDF program period you apply to, i.e. the 2015/2016 PDF program period activity dates are on or after August 1, 2015 and end no later than July 31, 2016.

5. **Q: I am interested in studying for an online Masters degree that will take more than a year to complete. Is it possible to apply for a PDF?**

A: Yes. You can apply with a proposal towards earning a degree. Submit your proposal for the portion of your studies that will occur and be billed and paid for during the 2015/2016 PDF program period that commence on or after August 1, 2015 and have been completed by July 31, 2016.

6. **Q: I am a medical professional. Could I apply to receive a fellowship for pursuing a local host-country certification?**

A: Yes. Doctors, nurses, lawyers and other licensed/certified professionals are eligible to apply for educational requirements to obtain a local host-country license/certification. Please be aware that the requirements for this will vary greatly from country to country and the length of time it may take to get the license/certification may be far longer than the time you will be in your current assignment. You may want to contact the FLO Global Employment Advisor for your post. Contact GEI@state.gov for GEA contact information.

7. Q: Does language training qualify for this program?

A: Yes.

8. Q: My proposal is for a certificate program which requires that I take three elective courses. Do I need to choose my electives now?

A: No. Please indicate how many elective courses you plan to take during the PDF program period and provide a list of electives that you can choose from that qualify for your certificate program. The list must come from the school or their website page/catalog. If your proposal is selected, your reimbursement request and invoices/receipts must match your approved proposal courses.

9. Q: I can't locate the dates and costs of my proposed activity online because the schedule hasn't been announced yet. How do I submit my proposal without this?

A: If your proposed activity dates and costs for the 2015/2016 PDF program period dates are not available, contact the provider to find out if it is likely the activity will be offered during the program period (commences on or after August 1, 2015 and completed no later than July 31, 2016). The costs from the most recent offering of the activity that you find online must be used in your PDF proposal. Please be aware that if you are selected to receive a PDF, the amount awarded can't increase, even if the activity costs increase.

10. Q: My family and I plan to relocate to our overseas posting soon. Given that we will not necessarily have time to research all educational facilities before the PDF applications are due, may we be somewhat general in describing the program and school to which I would apply? Or does the application need to be very exact?

A: Your application proposal and budget need to be exact using the most currently available information as of the date you apply in order to be considered. If your application is selected, the one-time reimbursement request will be submitted after completion of the project activities and invoices and receipts must be matched against the original proposal. The award is based on the approved application proposal and budget and the amount will not change after selection.

11. Q: I am finalizing the budget portion of my PDF application. My proposal costs are for activity in my host country. How do I handle the exchange rate for the USD figures? If I am selected, what if the costs increase by the time I begin?

A: You must use the most current costs available from the course provider and the exchange rate as of the date you apply. The PDF program uses the State Department International Currency Exchange Rates which can be found by going to ice.gfs.state.gov/default.aspx. All

costs are verified using the link to costs that you are required to provide in your application before it can be forwarded to the selection committee. The amount of PDFs offered is based on the budget portion of the application. The PDF amount will not increase from the time you are offered the fellowship and the time you submit your reimbursement request.

Selection:

1. **Q: I understand the PDF program is reimbursable after completion of the professional development activity. How do I know if I will be given a PDF?**

A: This program is an annual program with an open application season. Applicants compete for a limited number of PDFs and the deadline to apply is May 1, 2015. Applications are reviewed by a selection committee, and applicants will be notified of results by August 1, 2015.

2. **Q: What is the selection process?**

A: There are a number of factors involved in the selection process which do not necessarily mean that any one application is not a good one. The applicant pool is very competitive.

To start, the selection committee criteria are outlined in the 2015/2016 PDF program guidelines announcement of the open application season found on FLO's [website](#).

Selection committees are comprised of regional bureau, Human Resources/Overseas Employment, and FLO representatives. Each application is individually reviewed and scored by each committee member. Application scores are ranked within each bureau. FLO has a budgeted allotment and it awards PDFs within each bureau, based upon the percentage of that bureau's applicants of the total number of PDF applicants. Historically, FLO has been able to offer PDFs to approximately 50% of the total number of applicants.

3. **Q: What can I do to prepare a competitive application?**

A: Read the PDF program guidelines from the announcement carefully and in their entirety. You can find them on FLO's [website](#). Be aware of and address any of the selection committee criteria that apply to you. Clearly describe and detail your professional background and proposed plans, in addition to any of the selection committee criteria that apply to you. Submit an application which links your overall professional aspirations to your proposed enrichment activities for the upcoming PDF program period.

Reimbursement

1. **Q: Which expenses would *not* be eligible for reimbursement under the PDF program?**

A: Membership fees and subscription costs, travel, transportation, lodging costs, per diem, child care costs, hardware or equipment, and startup business costs are not eligible for reimbursement.

2. **Q: I was selected to receive a PDF. I will need to pay for registration for my approved activity before the PDF program start date of August 1, 2015. Will I be able to submit this cost for reimbursement?**

A: You can submit receipts dated prior to August 1, 2015 for allowable PDF program costs from your approved activity as long as the activity itself does not start until the 2015/2016 PDF program period start date of on or after August 1, 2015.

3. **Q: My professional development activity is for 2 semesters of study. Can I submit my reimbursement request once I have paid for my second semester?**

A: No. Reimbursement requests are submitted after you have completed your enrichment activity for a one-time reimbursement.

4. **Q: Do I have to report the PDF on my income taxes?**

A: Yes. You are responsible for declaring the funds received on your federal taxes. Please contact your tax preparer for guidance.

More Information

1. **Q: Where can I find more information?**

A: Please visit the FLO's PDF webpage at www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21642.htm. If you don't find the information you need on the website, please email **FLOAskEmployment@state.gov** or call 202-647-1076 (x71076).